

Joe Bustillos
COMM201 - December 2, 1987
School Board Meeting

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Last night Morrisville Board of Education voted 6-3 against eliminating open classroom teaching and 9-0 in favor of asking its sixth grade teachers to present a report on the program.

Open classroom teaching came under question when Board President Charles Brown pointed out that for the third straight year, Morrisville sixth graders' scores on the Standard Reading Test declined. He said that the sixth graders' scores at the end of the year were equivalent to the national average sixth graders' scores at the end of the first semester.

In the open classroom approach, all 57 sixth grade students were taught in one large room by two teachers and a teacher's aid, according to assistant superintendent, John Klein.

Klein said, "The idea was for teachers to have more flexibility in their planning and teaching approach . . ."

Klein said that because of the small number of sixth graders, the low scores of a few students, some who were reading at second and third grade levels, brought down the averages of the whole group. Klein also said that the extended illness of one of the teachers, Ethel Rosegrant, may have hampered the program.

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"We never did find a single substitute who could fit into that situation. One teacher can't keep track of what 57 students are doing and instead of individualized instruction I'm afraid there may have been too much wasted time. Personally, though, I would give the open classroom one more year to take hold. It hasn't really had a fair trial yet," Klein said.

Board members Jack Gantz and Alice Richardson ^{Awk.} motioned for the elimination of the open classroom.

"I never liked all this experimental stuff anyway. Look, it is time we got back to basics---reading, writing and arithmetic. That's what I learned at school and the kids just aren't getting it," Gantz said.

Board member Joan Dershowitz, said that changing educational policy on the basis of one five-minute presentation might be too hasty. She ^{Awk.} motioned that the sixth grade teachers involved with the program, Rosegrant and Paul Morris, give a report at the next board meeting.

Gantz's motion failed 6-3 with Gantz, Richardson and Bob Shaeffer voting for it. Dershowitz's motion passed 9-0.

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